

ARMY.

REPORT

ON

RECRUITING IN IRELAND.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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REPORT ON RECRUITING IN IRELAND.

To Field-Marshal The Earl Kitchener, K.G.,
Secretary of State for War.

The present time seems opportune for a survey of the contribution by Ireland to the Armed Forces of the Crown, and a statement of the machinery by which it is hoped the flow of recruits to the Colours will be maintained during the continuance of the present war.

On 1st August, 1913, there were serving in the Army 20,780 Irishmen—on the outbreak of the war 17,804 Reservists and 12,463 Special Reservists rejoined, making a total on mobilization of 51,046 men.

Subsequently three new divisions, *i.e.*, the 10th, the 36th, and the 16th, consisting of 12 battalions each, were organized, making with the original 16 Irish battalions of the Regular Forces a total of 52 battalions.

Simultaneously the Reserve brigades were expanded or called into existence for the purpose of feeding divisions at the front and making good the waste of war.

On the 9th October, 1915, the total number of enlistments since the outbreak of war amounted to 75,293, giving a grand total of 126,339 of pre- and post-war enlistments.

In the same month the War Office indicated that the primary task for Ireland was the maintenance at war strength of these 52 battalions. An examination of 13 months' experience revealed the fact that the call for drafts from units at the front amounted in the aggregate to 100 per cent. per annum.

Allowing a margin for contingencies, an average weekly supply of 1,100 recruits was required to maintain the Reserves at an adequate level. The monthly averages of recruits which in the Spring of 1915 exceeded these figures, had in the Autumn fallen far below it. A further effort was needed to restore the situation.

At a conference convened on the 15th October at the Vice-Regal Lodge, representative of all parties, it was decided to ask the Lord Lieutenant, with the consent of the War Office, to undertake the task of Director of Recruiting for Ireland. It was felt that the very valuable activities of the existing Central and Local Recruiting Committees called for greater co-ordination and common impulse.

An officially administered Department of Recruiting was forthwith organized. Several provincial directors were appointed. County controllers were created and local committees were formed or reorganized, and the machinery for attestation was expanded and strengthened.

Activities were started on the 30th October on the issue of a general postal appeal. Opportunity was afforded to recruits to specify the regiments and divisions which they preferred to join. About 60 per cent. of the recruits availed themselves of this privilege.

Since the commencement of the campaign to 18th December, 1915, 7,444 recruits were enlisted. Thus in 7 weeks a weekly average of 1,063 was obtained.

It is certain that the holiday season and the temporary dislocation caused by the introduction of the Military Service Bill have had an adverse effect from which there are already signs of a definite recovery.

That there is still a large reservoir of men cannot be doubted. It is estimated that on 15th of August, 1915, there were in Ireland 416,409 unmarried males of military age—of these 252,000 were engaged in the agricultural industry.

Allowing for subsequent enlistments and rejections there should still be about 400,000 unattested single males of military age, but this number is subject to the usual deductions for men who are indispensable for agriculture and commerce, production of munitions, transport service, &c., and also for men who will be found to be medically unfit. It would be surprising if, after all these deductions were made, the balance of men available exceeded 100,000.

It will be evident that the smaller class of those outside the industry of agriculture, from which in the main the recruits have up to the present been drawn, is not in a position to provide an additional large contingent of recruits, although further support

may be expected from the commercial and shop assistants' classes, or from those engaged in occupations in which their services can be replaced by those of women. In this connection it is encouraging to note the progress which has been made in the formation of a commercial battalion.

Turning to the agricultural population, it must be admitted that up to the present only a small response has attended recruiting efforts. Regard must be had to the fact that agriculture is a public service, and that farmers are exhorted to increase the area under tillage, and, further, that the majority of farms are under 15 acres in area, but it must not be assumed that in Ireland agriculture is under-staffed relatively to Great Britain. A comparison shows that the percentage of men between 20 and 45 per 100 acres of all crops is in England and Wales 3·6, Scotland 3·1, and Ireland 6·8; whereas the percentage of such men to 100 cattle which in Ireland is 7·0, in England is not more than 8·2, and Scotland 6·3. It would seem, therefore, that a considerable number might be deducted without reducing the number of hands below the figure at which it is found suitable to engage in farming in Great Britain.

The physical difficulties of making an impression on a scattered population of conservative tendencies still prevail, but signs are not wanting that the farming class are awakening to their responsibilities in this direction and the formation of farmers' battalions has come within the sphere of practical realization.

The number of recruits raised in Ireland in the period from the 2nd August, 1914, to the 8th instant inclusive is 86,277, of these 10,384 were raised between the 10th October, 1915, and the 8th instant inclusive.

The totals are made up as follows:—

	From 2nd August, 1914, to 8th January, 1916.	From 10th October, 1915, to 8th January, 1916.
REGIMENTAL AREAS AND COUNTIES.		
No. 11 District.		
27th Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Donegal, Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone.	5,511	871
83rd Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Antrim and Down (exclusive of Belfast City).	5,441	962
87th Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Armagh, Cavan, Louth and Monaghan.	5,825	559
102nd Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow.	2,374	585
Belfast Recruiting Area	26,883	2,345
Dublin Recruiting Area (City and County)	16,726	2,699
Total for No. 11 District	60,760	7,412
No. 12 District.		
18th Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford.	7,040	950
88th Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo.	5,074	551
100th Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of King's County, Longford, Meath, Queen's County and Westmeath.	4,308	847
101st Regimental Recruiting Area, comprising the counties of Clare, Cork (north-west portion), Kerry and Limerick.	5,972	325
Cork Recruiting Area (the City and the part of the County not included in the 101st Area).	6,519	719
Total for No. 12 District	25,517	3,572

These figures are a little below those shown in the Police Returns. This is probably due to the following principal causes:—

- (1.) The Police Returns may include persons who have left home ostensibly to enlist, but who have not in fact done so, or have been rejected, and who have not returned.

- (2.) The Police Returns for Belfast and Dublin may include some persons attested there who are also included in the returns from country districts from which they come.
- (3.) The Military Returns would omit and Police Returns include persons ordinarily resident in Ireland who may have enlisted when temporarily in England or Scotland.

The distribution of recruits to both the Army and Navy up to 15th December into the four provinces is estimated by the Police to be as follows:—Ulster, 49,760; Leinster, 27,438; Munster, 14,190; and Connaught, 3,589. regard must be paid, however, to the fact that 73.9 per cent. of the adult male population of Connaught is engaged in agriculture. The similar percentages in the other provinces are, respectively, Munster, 51.3; Leinster, 37.4; and Ulster, 46.5 per cent. The general disinclination of the farming class to which allusion has been made to join the Colours is not specially characteristic of one province more than another, and adversely affects the provincial quota in proportion to these percentages.

At the commencement of the period under review 5,100 sailors recruited in Ireland were serving in the Navy. Since August, 1914, a further 2,446 have joined.

Taking the two services together a total of 145,869 is reached.

No account can here be taken of Irishmen recruited in Great Britain and serving in British or Scotch regiments and the conclusion submitted concerns the insular contribution only.

What is known as the "Derby Scheme" has not been applied to Ireland, nor is it desirable to entertain a group system of deferred enlistment at present.

In conclusion, the general and cordial co-operation with which the efforts of the department have been promoted and sustained should be acknowledged.

WIMBORNE.

14th January, 1916.